

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 271408Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1692
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY OF HOA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 4731

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IR, KU
SUBJ: GOK CONCERNED WITH IRANIAN DEVELOPMENTS

1. DURING WEMEETING AUGUST 26 ON ANOTHER SUBJECT WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY RASHID AL-RASHID, THE DISCUSSION TURNED TO THE SITUATION IN IRAN, AND I ASKED AL-RASHID FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE DEVELOPMENTS THERE. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE RECENT UNFORTUNATE EVENTS BUT FELT THAT THE SHAH COULD HANDLE THE SITUATION. AL-RASHID DID NOT BELIEVE THAT IRANIAN RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR INCITING THIS TURMOIL, BUT THOUGHT THAT OTHER ELEMENTS, INCLUDING DISAFFECTED TRIBAL FACTIONS AND MARXISTS/LEFTISTS WERE BEHIND THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT ATTACKS. HE OBSERVED, HOWEVER, THAT, IF THE SITUATION IN IRAN REALLY DID GET OUT OF HAND, IT HAD THE POTENTIAL OF ANOTHER AFGHANISTAN. IN SUCH CASE THE IMPACT WOULD NOT ONLY BE CONSIDERABLE IN THE IMMEDIATE
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MIDDLE EASTERN AREA BUT, IN HIS OPINION, WOULD HAVE EXTENSIVE REPERCUSSIONS IN OTHER REGIONS OF THE WORLD. THIS WOULD TEND TO CONFIRM A TREND OF RESCTION OF US INFLUENCE WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN NOTED IN PAKISTAN AND ALSO IN ETHIOPIA.

2. IN RESPONSE TO THE UNDERSECRETARY'S REQUEST FOR MY ESTIMATION OF THE SITUATION, I NOTED THAT I WAS NOT INFORMED

IN DETAIL ABOUT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND HAD NOT, SINCE MY RETURN FROM LEAVE, BEEN ABLE TO CATCH UP ON ALL THAT HAD TRANSPIRED IN IRAN. IN RESPONSE TO HIS PARTICULAR QUERY ABOUT THE LOYALTY OF THE IRANIAN ARMY TO THE SHAH, I INDICATED THAT I SAW NO REASON WHY THE IRANIAN ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT CONTINUE TO BE LOYAL. I OBSERVED THAT THE SHAH HAD TAKEN VERY GOOD CARE OF THE ARMED FORCES, PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO HIS EFFORTS IN PROVIDING THEM WITH THE LATEST AND MOST SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, AND I FELT THAT THIS CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE MILITARY'S NEEDS WOULD BE RECIPROCATED.

3. I ALSO SAID THAT, ACCORDING TO THE LIMITED INFORMATION I HAD, I COULD NOT EXCLUDE THE ROLE OF IRANIAN RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN FOMENTING THESE INCIDENTS. IT APPEARED TO ME THAT BOTH RELIGIOUS AND MARXIST/LEFTIST ELEMENTS WERE INVOLVED IN A RATHER UNNATURAL COMBINATION. I RECALLED FROM MY PREVIOUS SERVICE IN IRAN THAT THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS STRENUOUSLY OPPOSED THE SHAH'S LAND REFORM PROGRAM WHEN IT WAS INSTITUTED IN 1962 AND CONTINUED STILL TO OPPOSE IT AS WELL AS THE POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION WHICH THE SHAH WAS SEEKING TO INTRODUCE INTO IRAN.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A FURTHER QUERY BY AL-RASHID AS TO THE SHAH'S ABILITY TO HANDLE THE SITUATION, I COMMENTED THAT, WHILE THE SHAH PROBABLY HAD THE FORCE TO CONTROL THESE ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATIONS, HE WAS RELUCTANT TO USE IT
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AS IT WOULD CONTRADICT THE TREND OF HIS PROGRESSIVE LIBERALIZATION POLICIES.

5. COMMENT: I HOPE THAT MY COMMENTS ON THE IRANIAN SITUATION DID NOT DIVERGE FROM EMBASSY TEHRAN'S ASSESSEMENT OF THE SITUATION AND WOULD WELCOME ANY CORRECTION OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SO THAT I MAY BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THIS SITUATION OF ACUTE CONCERN WITH GOK OFFICIALS WHEN THE OCCASION ARISES.
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